VSEiP
Virginia Special Education Improvement Plan

Report Highlights

Virginia Department of Education
Division of Special Education and Student Services
March 2003

Introduction

The Department of Education's Virginia Special Education Improvement Plan (VSEIP) is a dynamic, strategically designed plan to enable children and youth with disabilities to meet performance goals. Under this plan, which is based on a variety of data, Virginia's leadership and technical assistance will focus on improving student learning, graduation rates, and post school success. The plan has three strategic directions: school completion and graduation, personnel development, and parent and student involvement. Each strategic direction has indicators to measure performance toward achieving the goals.

The Virginia Department of Education reports periodically on the state's progress toward meeting the goals of this plan and achieving the following objectives:

- provide parents, teachers, related services personnel, administrators, faculty in higher education, and state and local policymakers with information regarding the state's progress on achieving the goals of the plan, and
- sustain the momentum for other partners to work toward achieving the goals.

More information about the Virginia Special Education Improvement Plan, including the full report, may be obtained from the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) Web site at the following address, http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/sped/data.shtml or by calling the Office of Special Education.

Phone Numbers:
voice phone   804-225-2932
voice toll-free 800-422-2083   TDD toll-free 800-422-1098

The Framework

The framework for Virginia's Special Education Improvement Plan was developed through extensive discussions with parents, students, administrators, and teachers, as well as representatives from the business community, university faculty, other state and local agencies, and advocacy agencies and groups. These stakeholders agreed that school programs needed to be guided by student results as well as compliance with regulations. The plan is grounded in the Virginia Board of Education's vision, mission, and goals.

The **VISION** of the Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction is to ensure, through high academic standards and accountability, that an effective education program is established and maintained in Virginia's public elementary, middle, and secondary schools.

The **MISSION** of the Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction, in cooperation with local school boards, is to increase student learning and achievement.

The **BELIEFS** of Virginia's Special Education Improvement Plan partners reflect agreement with high student expectations and consistent family involvement in the education process.
- High expectations, program accountability, and program supports influence the ability of students with disabilities to demonstrate improved learning and achievement.
- Families working as partners with educators and other service providers lead to more successful outcomes in the education of students with disabilities.
- Students with disabilities have the same rights and responsibilities as other students, including equal access to programs and activities.
- Students with disabilities are entitled to a safe and supportive educational environment that is conducive to learning.
- Communities that value all individuals as productive contributors to that community create an environment of success for all students.
- A comprehensive system of interdisciplinary, research-based training for educators and related service providers is essential to ensuring the availability of qualified and effective personnel.
- Equal opportunity and success require appropriate resources (human, material, and technological) distributed in accordance with the varying needs of students.

The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** (IDEA) supports early intervention and education leading to an increasing number of young adults with disabilities who:
- attend post-secondary education;
- find competitive employment at comparable rates to young adults without disabilities; and
- live independently as they enter adulthood.

The **PURPOSE** of Virginia's Special Education Improvement Plan is to improve and sustain the system and infrastructure needed to support students with disabilities as equal participants in Virginia's vision and mission for all students and to enable the achievement of the goals of IDEA.

Strategic Directions and Goals

The Virginia Special Education Improvement Plan has three strategic directions targeting broad areas for improvement and specifies five performance goals as a way of assessing improvement. The performance goals are aligned with the strategic directions.

Strategic Direction I: School Completion and Graduation

To facilitate, in cooperation with local education agencies, an increase in the graduation rate and school completion rate of students with disabilities in the context of higher academic expectations.

Goal 1.   _Increase the statewide percentage of students with disabilities graduating and successfully completing school._

Strategic Direction II: Personnel Development

To improve the performance of children and youth with disabilities by enhancing the knowledge, skills, abilities, and performance of all personnel who work with children and youth with disabilities.

Goal 2.   _Promote and increase the supply of qualified special education and related services personnel who are qualified in the special education area assigned._

Goal 3.   _Promote ongoing professional development opportunities that demonstrate and instruct research-based effective practices by increasing the statewide availability of personnel preparation opportunities in all areas._

Goal 4.   _Ensure ongoing personnel development opportunities that demonstrate and instruct in research-based effective practices by increasing the statewide personnel development opportunities focusing on effective practices (including collaboration) for administrators, regular educators, paraprofessionals, special educators, and related service providers._

## Strategic Direction III: Parent and Student Involvement

To improve meaningful parent and student involvement with special education services.

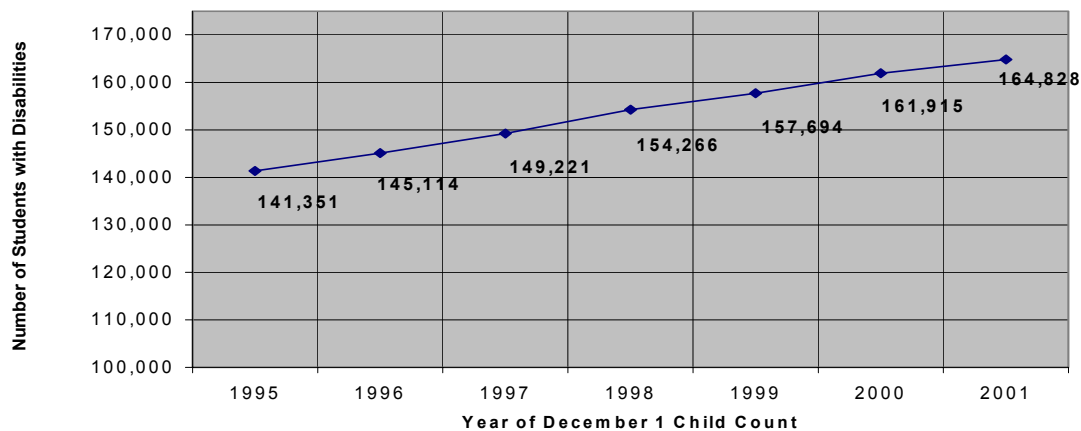_Goal 5_. _Increase parents' and students' active participation in special education decision-making._

Demographic Information in Virginia

As Virginia's population has grown, so has the incidence of students with disabilities.

Number of toddlers who transitioned from early intervention services
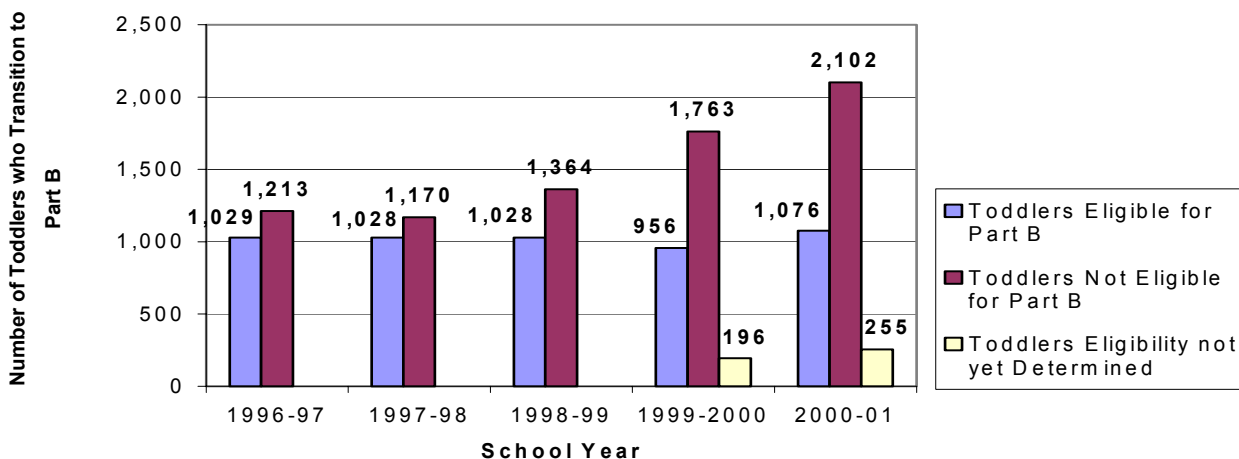
Number of students with disabilities in Virginia, ages 3-22

Number and type of placements for children with disabilities in Virginia, ages 3 to 5

Placements	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
Early Childhood Setting (not Special Education)	2,704	2,572	3,199	3,244
Early Childhood Setting (Special Education)	5,612	6,744	7,068	6,771
Home	568	830	984	810
Part Early Childhood (not Special Education) and Early Childhood (Special Education)	1,872	938	1,180	774
Residential Facility (public or private)	26	15	20	13
Separate School (public or private)	94	97	67	50
Itinerant Service	2,752	2,763	2,790	2,907
Reverse Mainstream	85	64	107	60

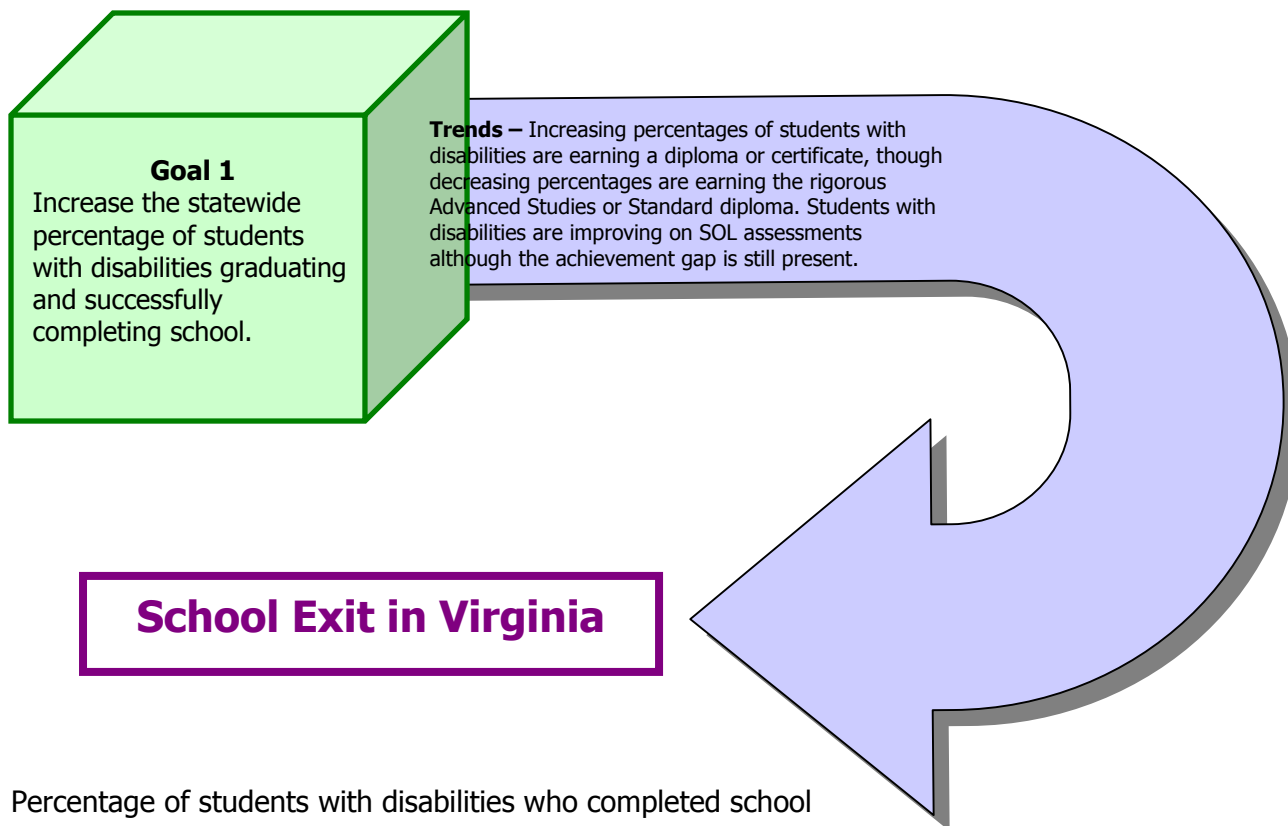Number and type of placements of children with disabilities in Virginia, ages 6 to 21

Placements	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
Regular Setting	135,996	139,506	142,610	144,726
Public Separate Facility	1,507	1,669	2,122	2,085
Private Day program	897	950	1,052	1,404
Public Residential	339	274	304	274
Private Residential	367	400	462	498
Home-Based	393	528	585	650
Hospital	8	46	19	10
Correctional Facility	505	621	633	518

Number of students with disabilities who received some or all of their special education services in the regular setting
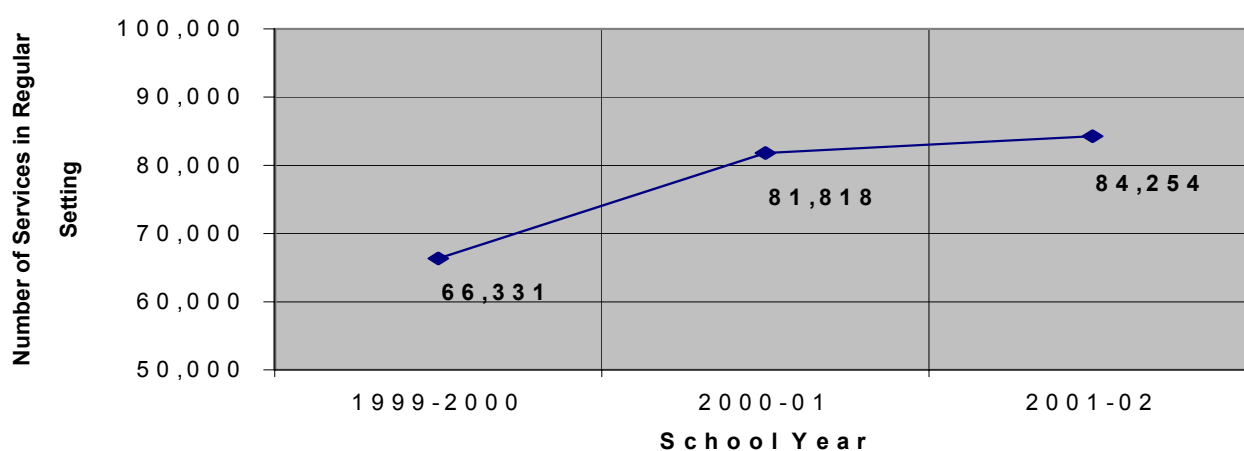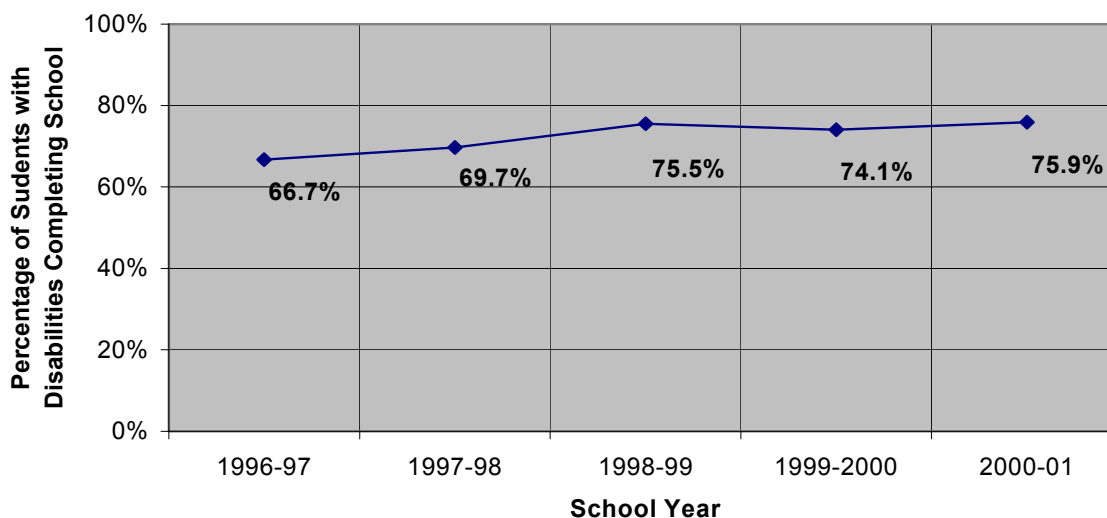
# Strategic Direction I: School Completion and Graduation

During this time period Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) established new policies to increase academic expectations of students and revised school graduation requirements. Performance indicators reflecting progress toward school completion and graduation include: participation in and performance on the Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments, school exit, and post-secondary trends, as well as procedural compliance that may impact school completion.

Goal 1
Increase the statewide percentage of students with disabilities graduating and successfully completing school.

Trends – Increasing percentages of students with disabilities are earning a diploma or certificate, though decreasing percentages are earning the rigorous Advanced Studies or Standard diploma. Students with disabilities are improving on SOL assessments although the achievement gap is still present.

School Exit in Virginia

Percentage of students with disabilities who completed school

66.7%   69.7%   75.5%   74.1%   75.9%

(Chart: Percentage of Students with Disabilities Completing School vs. School Year)

| School Year	Percentage
1996-97	66.7%
1997-98	69.7%
1998-99	75.5%
1999-2000	74.1%
2000-01	75.9%

Percentage of students with disabilities who completed school with a Standard or Advanced Studies Diploma compared to students with disabilities who completed school with a Modified Standard Diploma (offered in 2001), Special Diploma, Certificate of Program Completion, or GED Certificate
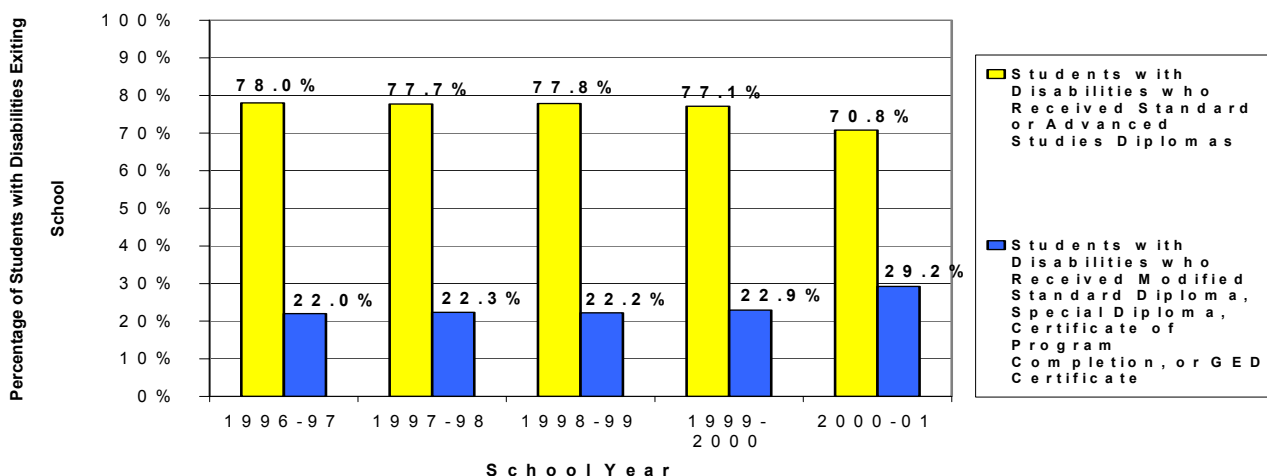
Percentage of secondary vocational program completers who attained at least 80% of the industry-validated competencies
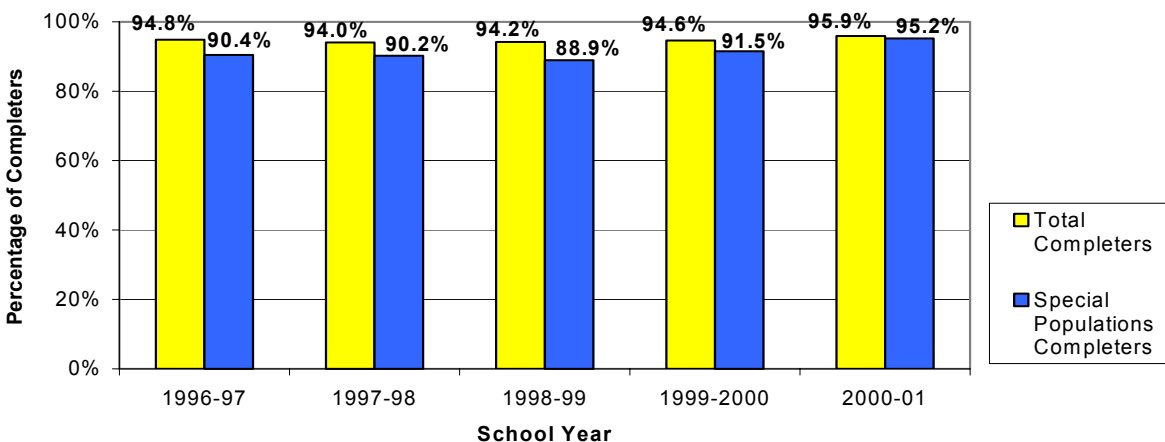
Percentage of students with disabilities who exited school by dropping out
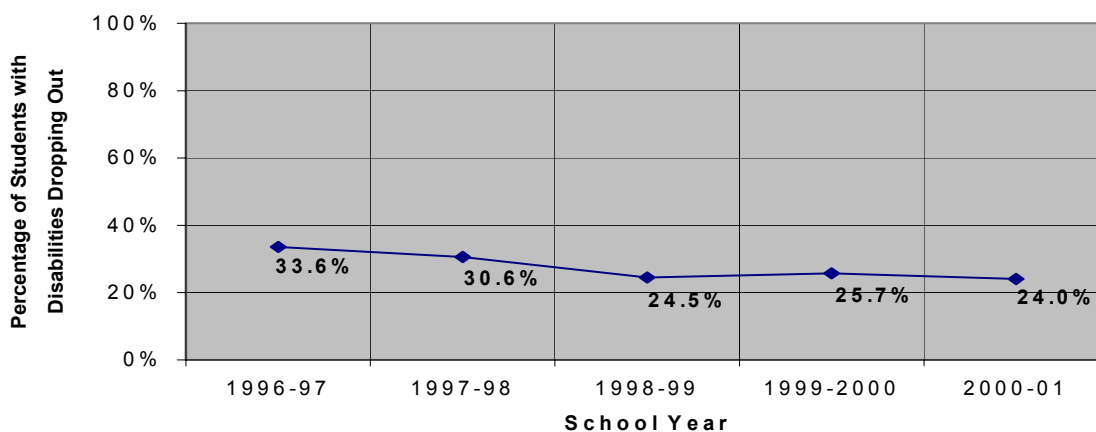
Participation in Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments

SOL Participation in grades 3, 5, 8, and End-of-Course (EOC) Assessments - Percentage of students with disabilities

Grade 3	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
English	75.4	70.7	70.4	69.4	72.7
Math	77.4	74.1	74.6	75.2	81.0
History/Social Science	77.4	74.3	75.4	77.1	81.4
Science	77.3	74.4	75.4	77.3	84.6

Grade 5	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
English: Reading, Literature & Research	77.2	70.8	69.5	71.4	74.2
English: Writing	78.0	71.3	70.8	72.5	71.6
Math	78.6	72.8	71.8	74.0	77.7
History/Social Science	78.8	76.0	70.4	74.3	80.2
Science	78.8	74.1	73.5	76.4	83.4

Grade 8	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
English: Reading, Literature & Research	76.9	72.7	72.5	78.4	84.9
English: Writing	76.9	73.3	74.3	78.4	79.8
Math	77.9	73.1	73.1	78.2	83.9
History/Social Science	76.9	75.0	71.8	74.5	77.9
Science	76.8	72.7	73.2	77.0	81.3

End-of-Course Content Area	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
English: Reading, Literature & Research	93.6	89.0	90.1	89.5	99.4
English: Writing	85.7	84.7	87.6	86.7	97.0
Algebra I	98.0	93.7	91.3	94.0	98.5
Geometry	99.2	98.0	96.5	94.6	99.5
Algebra II	99.1	98.8	97.9	98.1	99.7
U.S. History	93.5	92.0	90.8	91.4	98.9
World History I	94.8	89.0	91.4	94.6	99.4
World History II	93.4	89.2	91.6	94.2	99.3
Earth Science	94.1	89.4	88.9	93.4	98.6
Biology	95.1	92.3	91.9	91.7	99.5
Chemistry	99.1	97.2	98.0	97.7	99.2
World Geography	Not Offered	Not Offered	87.7	90.6	97.1

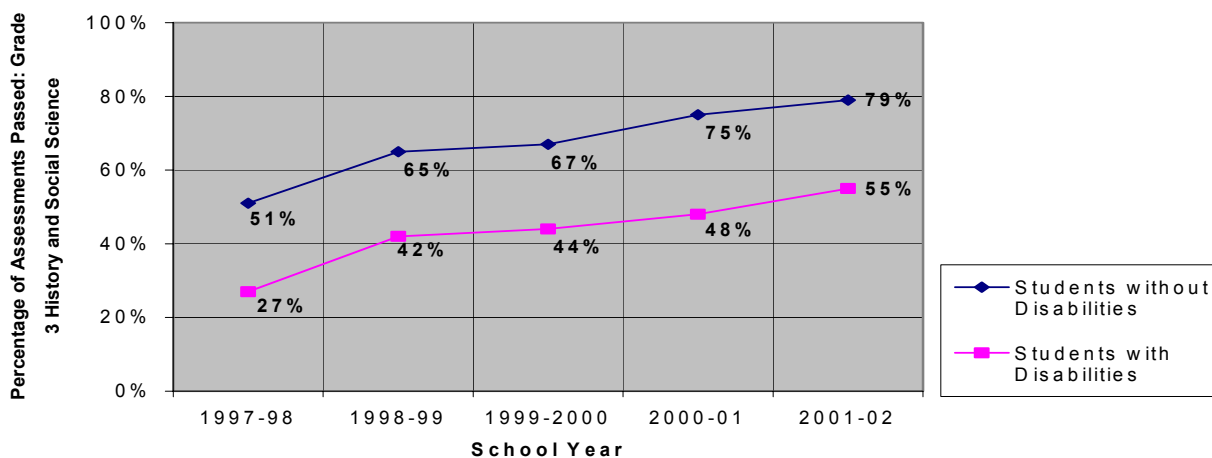# Performance in Standards of Learning (SOL) Assessments

SOL Performance in grade 3 English - Percentage of students with and without disabilities
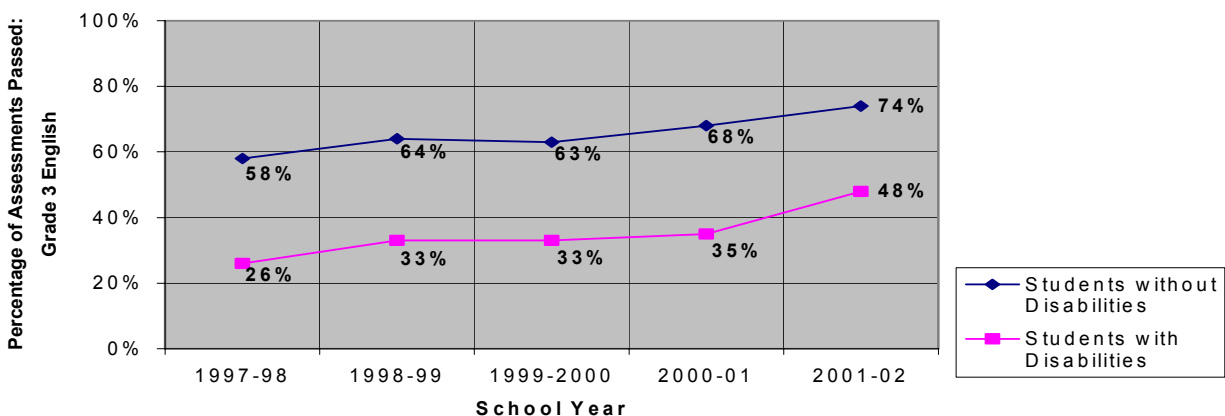
SOL Performance in grade 3 Math - Percentage of students with and without disabilities
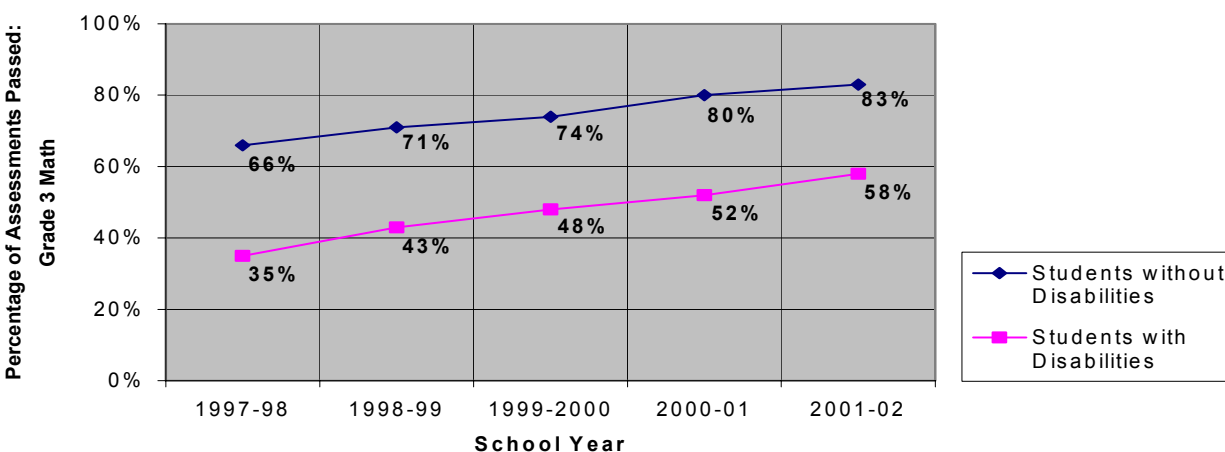
SOL Performance in grade 3 History & Social Studies - Percentage of students with and without disabilities

SOL Performance in grade 3 Science - Percentage of students with and without disabilities

SOL Performance in grade 5 English: Reading, Literature, and Research - Percentage of students with and without disabilities

SOL Performance in grade 5 English: Writing - Percentage of students with and without disabilities

SOL Performance in grade 5 Math - Percentage of students with and without disabilities

SOL Performance in grade 5 History & Social Studies - Percentage of students with and without disabilities

SOL Performance in grade 5 Science - Percentage of students with and without disabilities

SOL Performance in grade 8 English: Reading, Literature, and Research - Percentage of students with and without disabilities

SOL Performance in grade 8 English: Writing - Percentage of students with and without disabilities
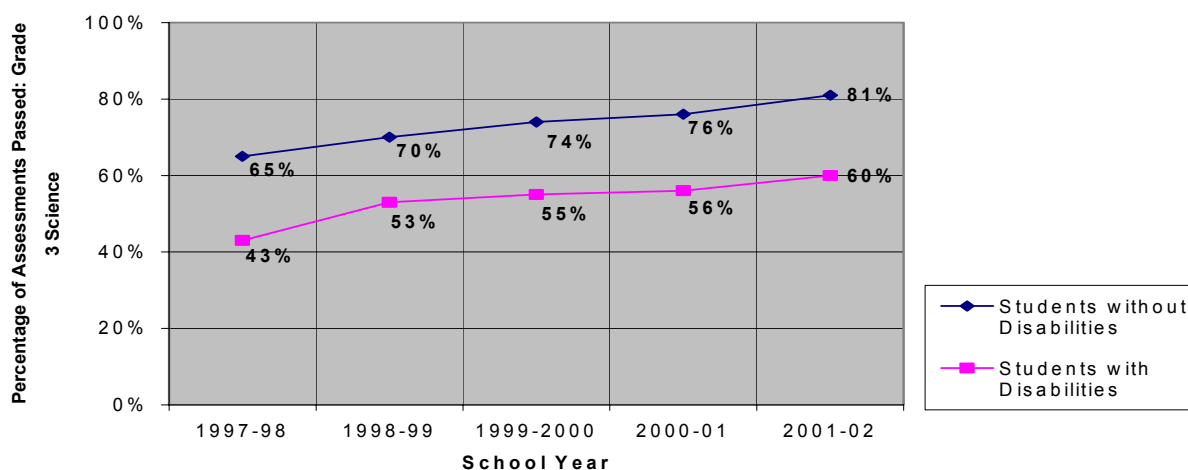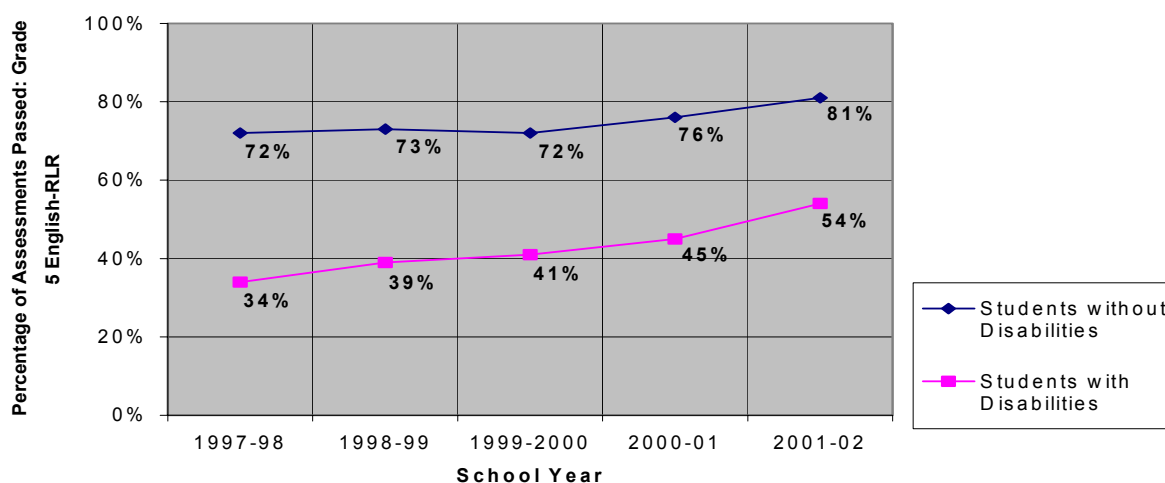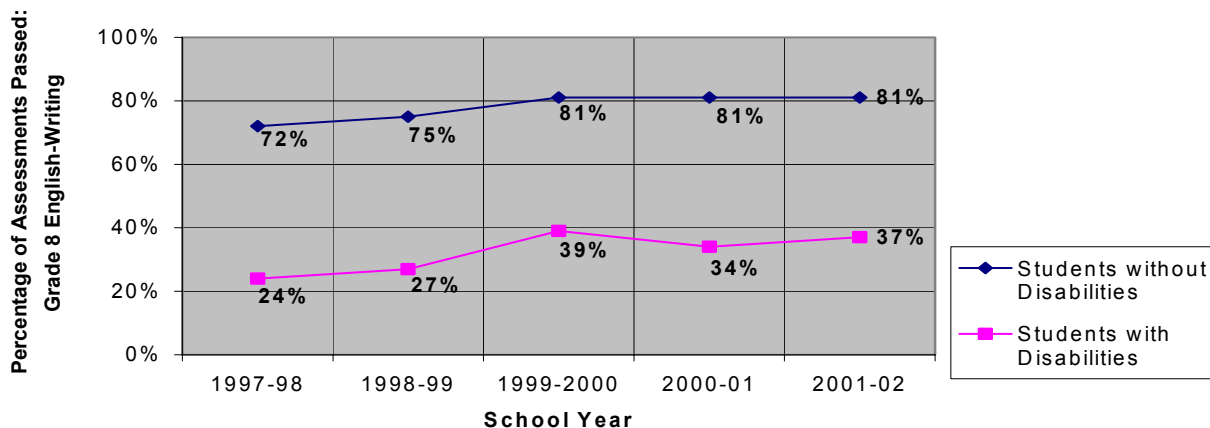

SOL Performance in grade 8 Math - Percentage of students with and without disabilities

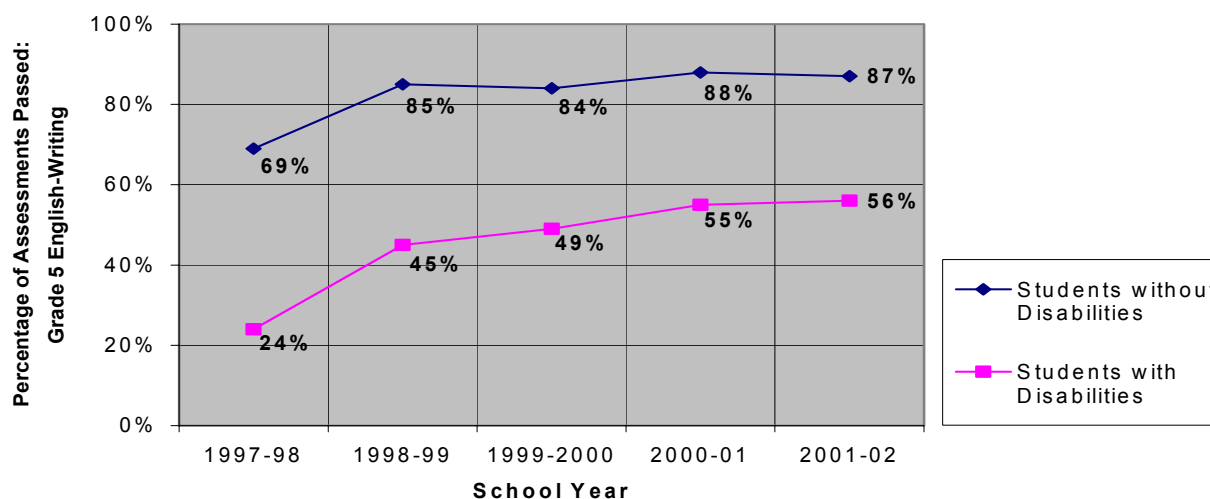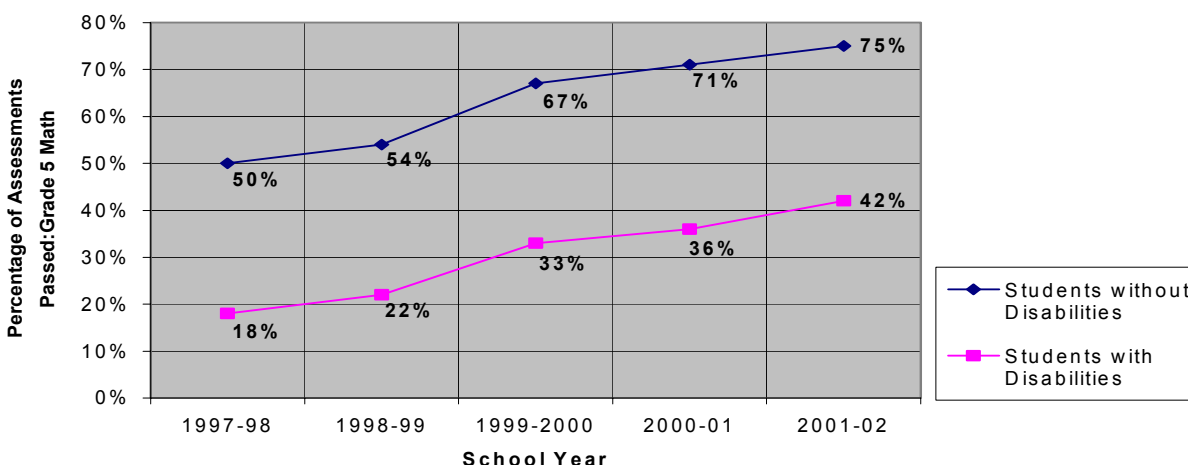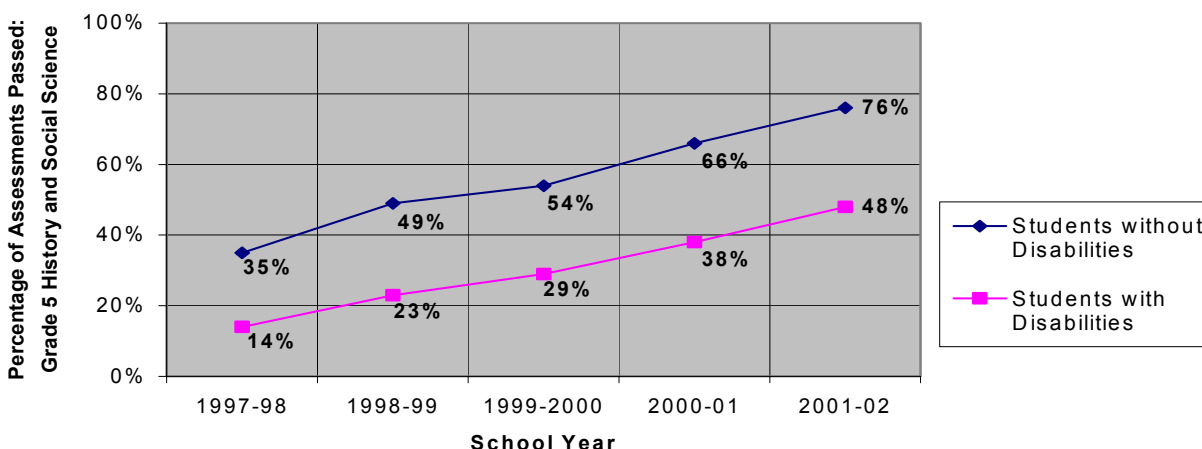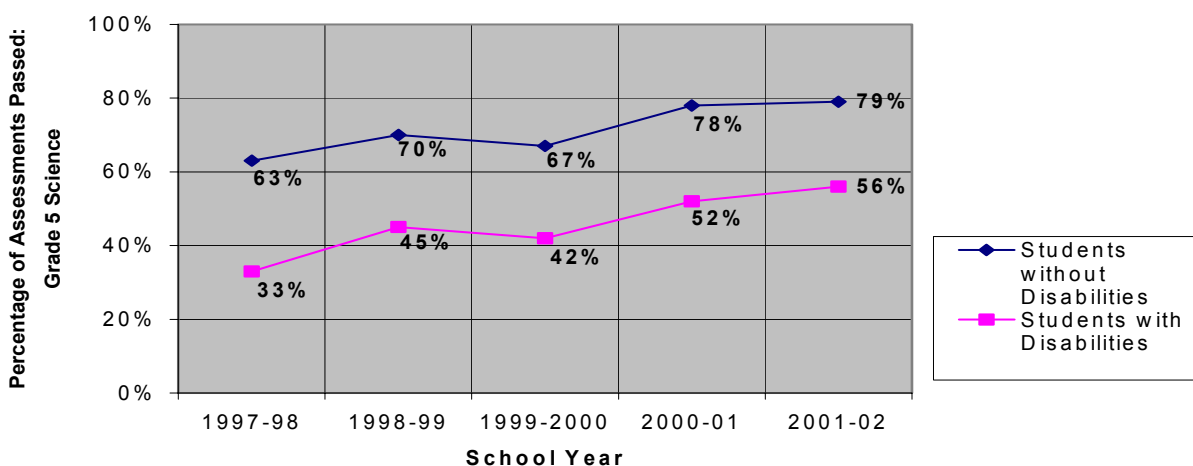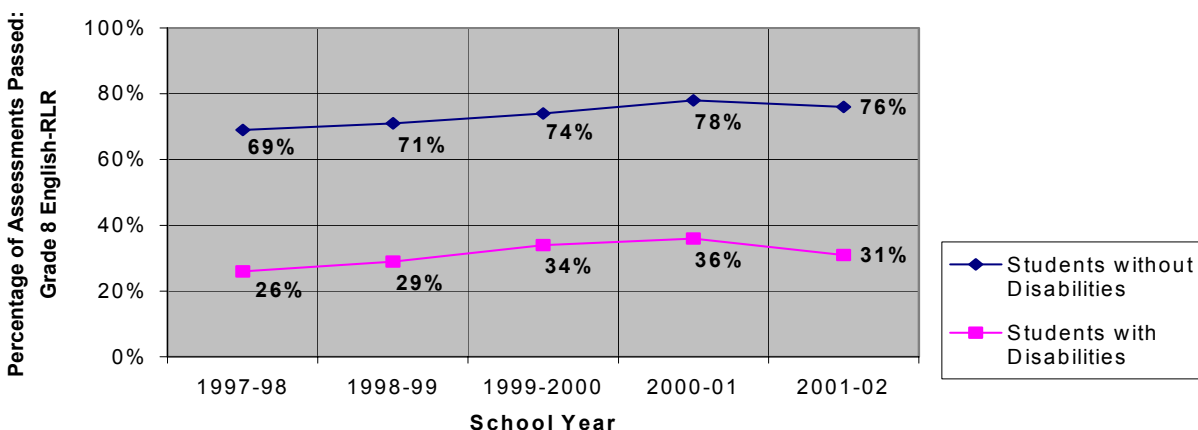## SOL Performance in grade 8 History & Social Studies - Percentage of students with and without disabilities

Percentage of Assessments Passed: Grade 8 History and Social Science

- Students without Disabilities
- Students with Disabilities

School Year	Students without Disabilities	Students with Disabilities
1997-98	38%	13%
1998-99	43%	16%
1999-2000	54%	23%
2000-01	60%	28%
2001-02	82%	51%
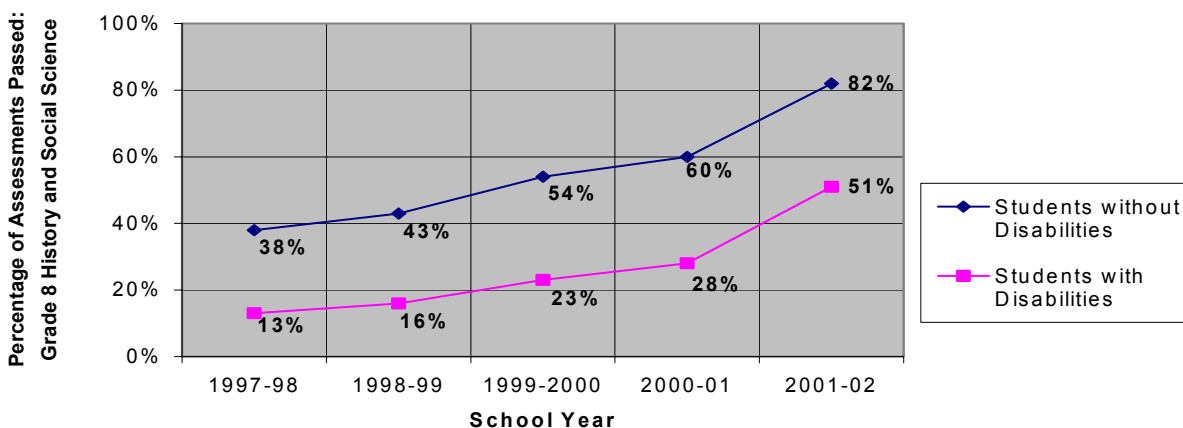
SOL Performance in grade 8 Science - Percentage of students with and without disabilities

Percentage of Assessments Passed: Grade Science

- Students without Disabilities
- Students with Disabilities

School Year	Students without Disabilities	Students with Disabilities
1997-98	75%	39%
1998-99	81%	50%
1999-2000	85%	55%
2000-01	88%	57%
2001-02	89%	59%

SOL Performance in End-of-Course English: Reading, Literature & Research – Percentage of students with and without disabilities

Percentage of Assessments Passed: EOC English-RLR

- Students without Disabilities
- Students with Disabilities

School Year	Students without Disabilities	Students with Disabilities
1997-98	74%	36%
1998-99	76%	36%
1999-2000	81%	40%
2000-01	85%	43%
2001-02	89%	54%

SOL Performance in End-of-Course English: Writing – Percentage of students with and without disabilities
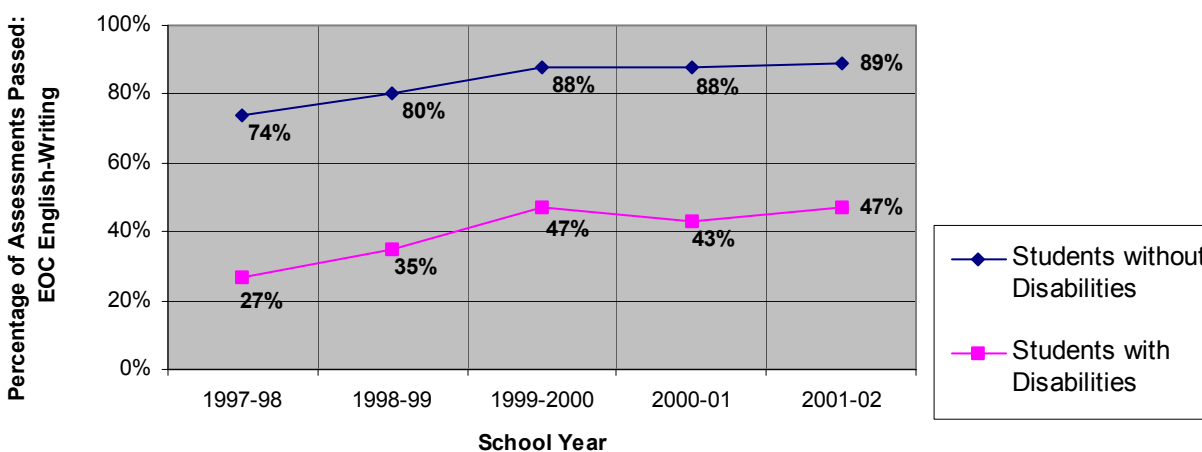
SOL Performance in End-of-Course Algebra I – Percentage of students with and without disabilities
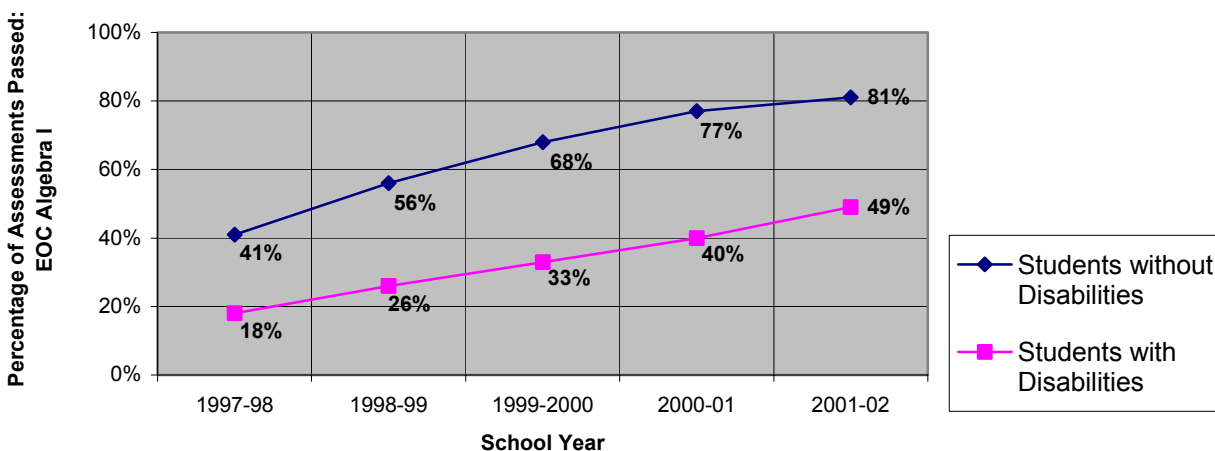
SOL Performance in End-of-Course Algebra II – Percentage of students with and without disabilities
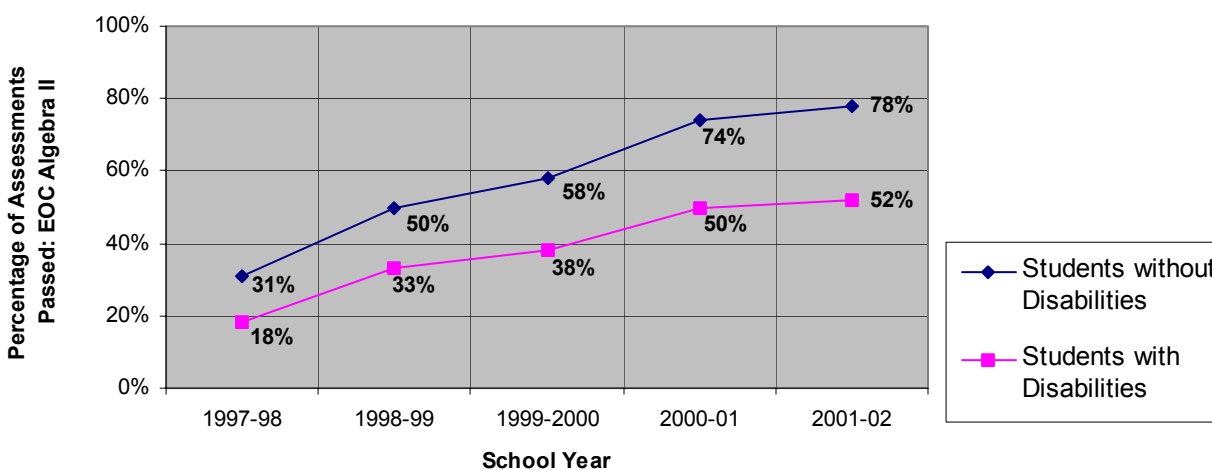
SOL Performance in End-of-Course Geometry – Percentage of students with and without disabilities
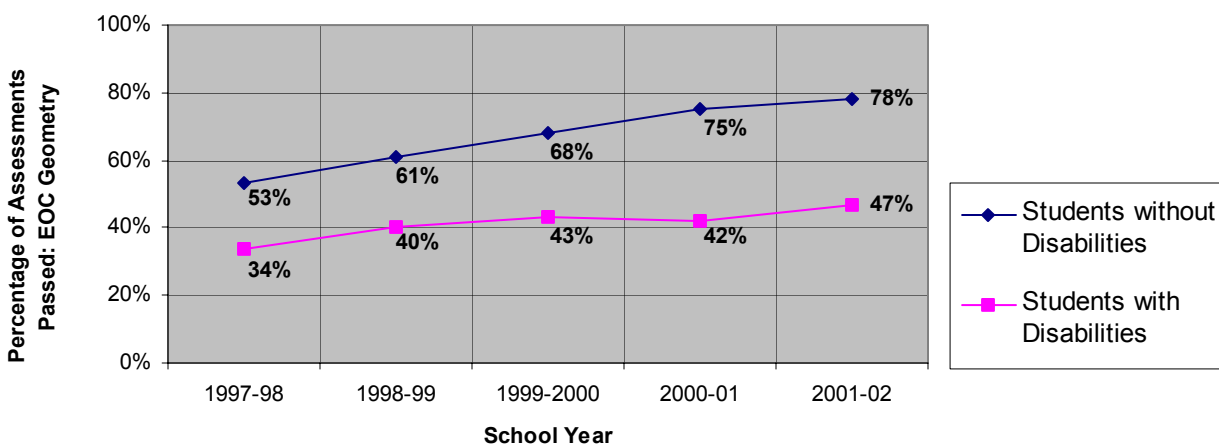
SOL Performance in End-of-Course Earth Science – Percentage of students with and without disabilities
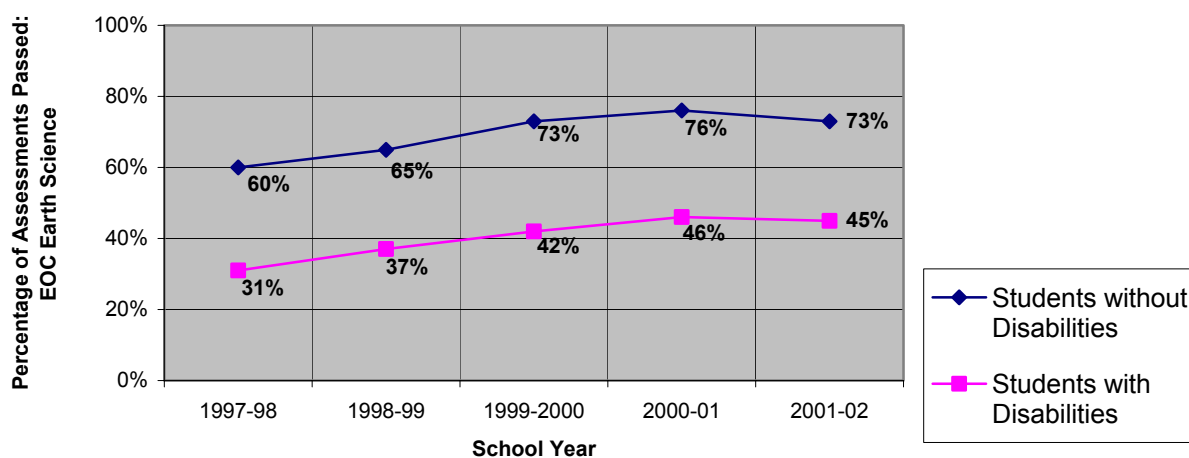
SOL Performance in End-of-Course Biology – Percentage of students with and without disabilities
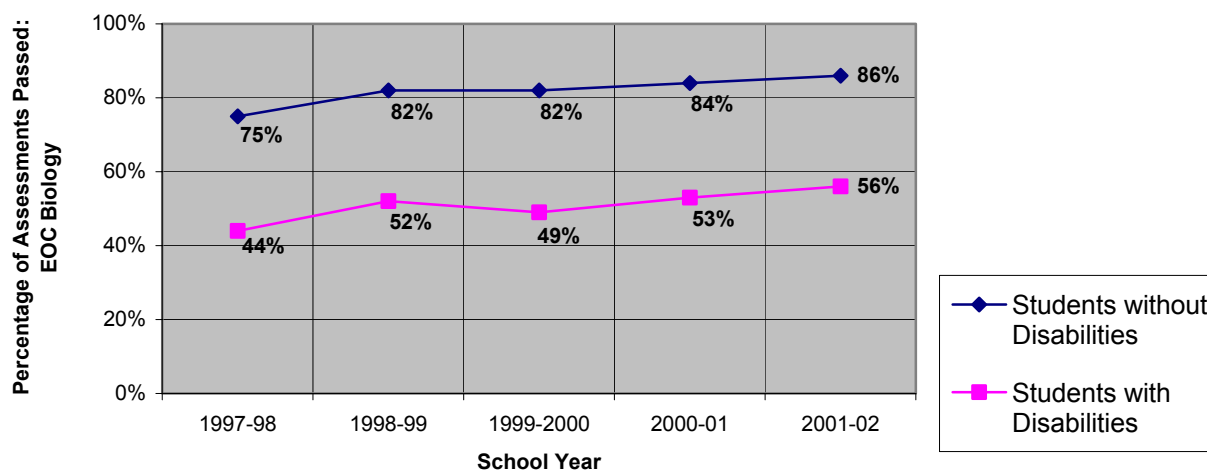
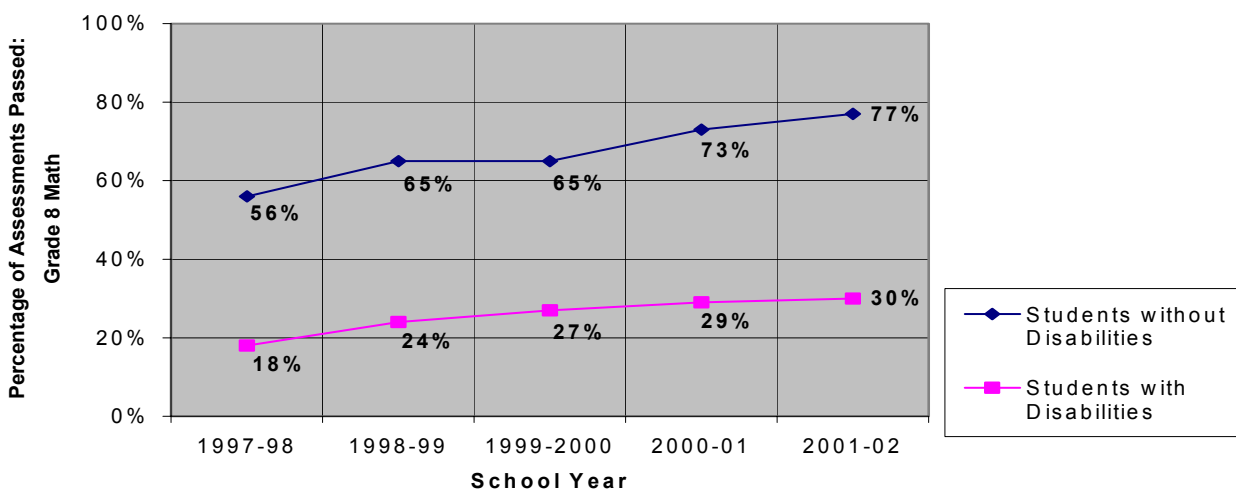SOL Performance in End-of-Course Chemistry – Percentage of students with and without disabilities
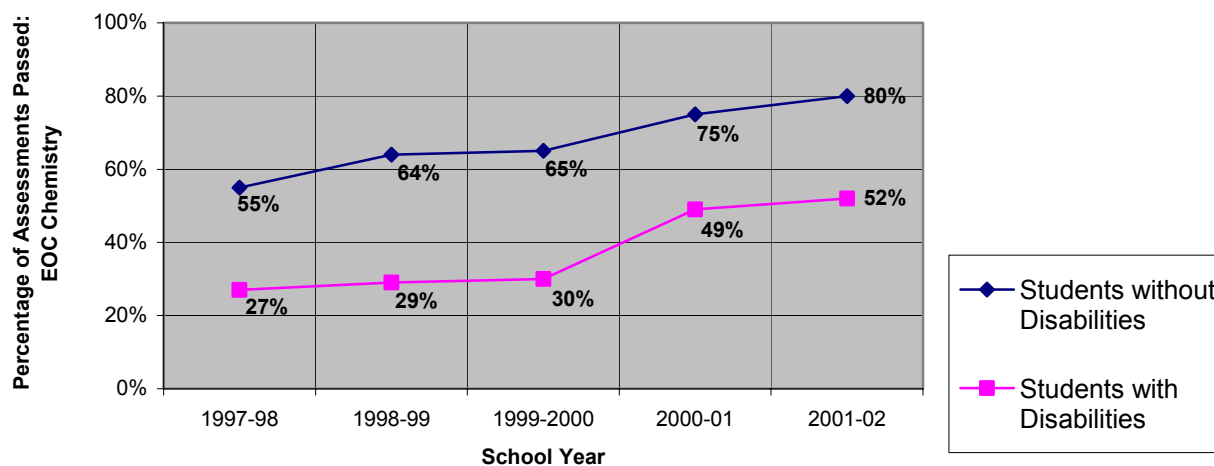
SOL Performance in End-of-Course World History I – Percentage of students with and without disabilities
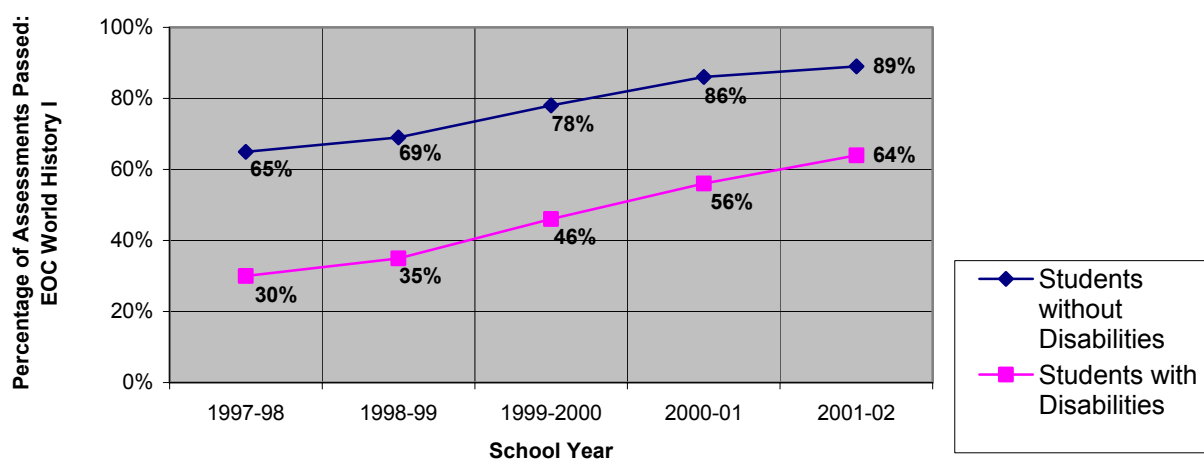
SOL Performance in End-of-Course World History II – Percentage of students with and without disabilities
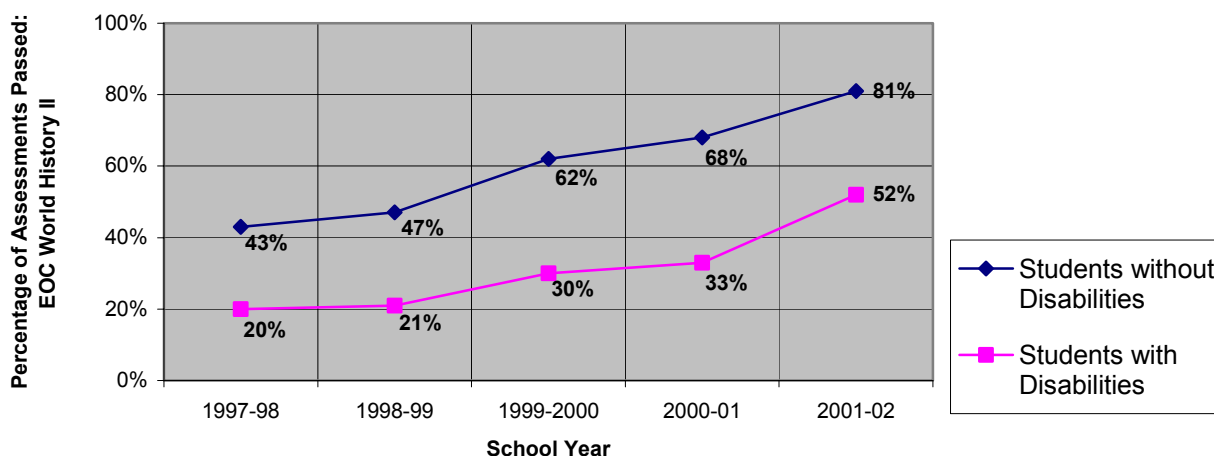
SOL Performance in End-of-Course U.S. History – Percentage of students with and without disabilities

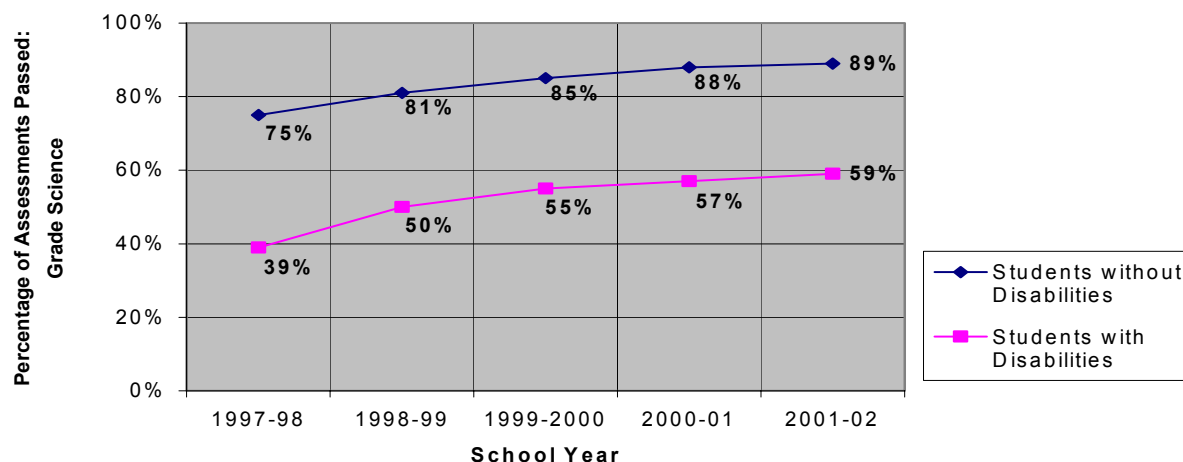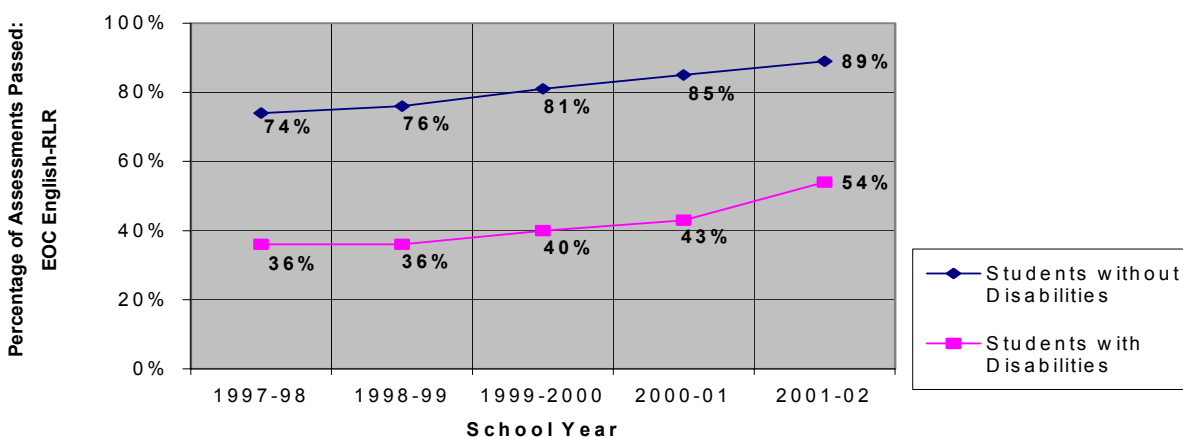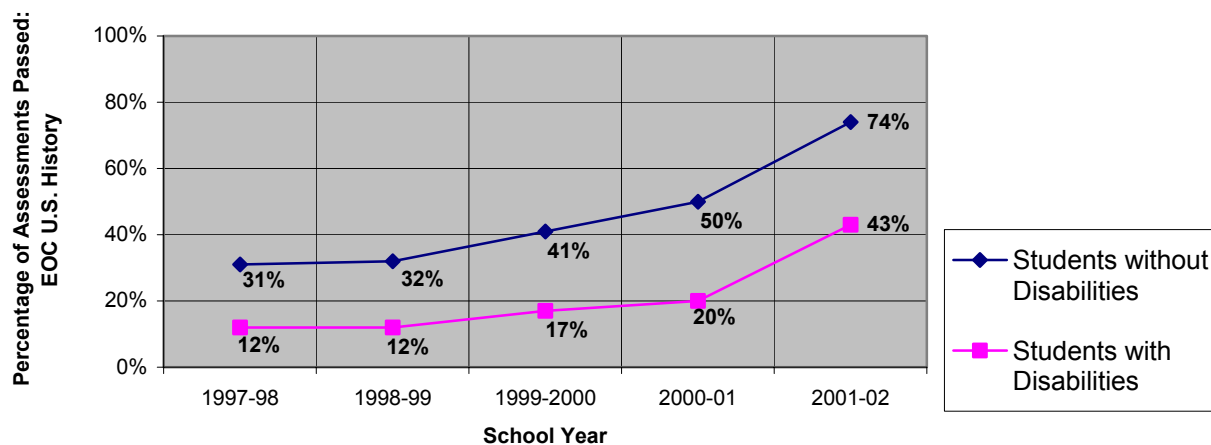SOL Performance in End-of-Course World Geography – Percentage of students with and without disabilities
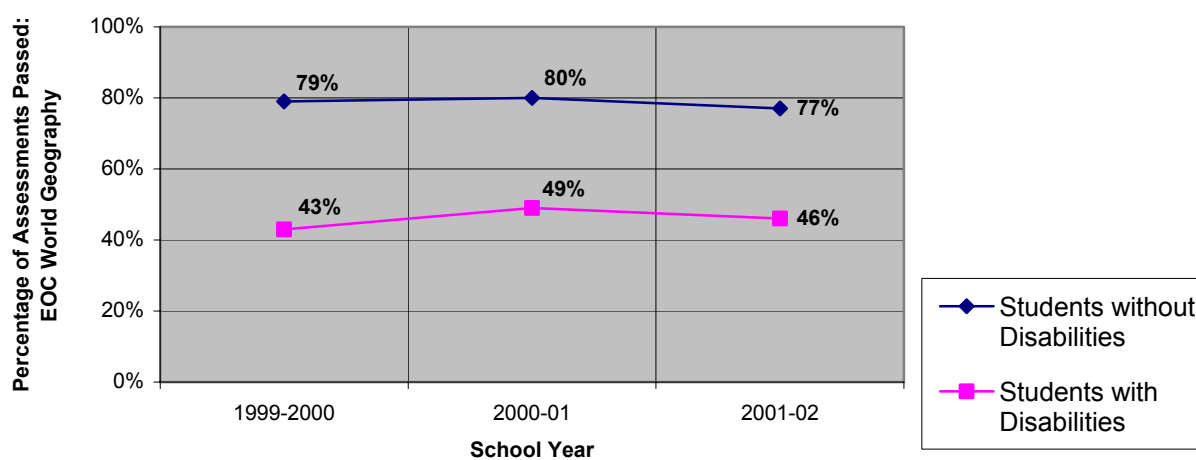
Virginia Alternate Assessment Program

Participation in Alternate Assessment by students with disabilities

	2000-2001	2001-2002
Students with an IEP	157,441	161,280
Students taking VAAP	2,008	2,849
Participation Rate	1.3%	1.8%

Performance in Alternate Assessment by students with disabilities

Pass Rate	English		Math		Science		History	
	2000-2001	2001-02	2000-2001	2001-02	2000-2001	2001-02	2000-2001	2001-02
Advanced	19%	43%	23%	47%	15%	38%	31%	54%
Proficient	63%	48%	64%	48%	67%	55%	52%	38%
Needs Improvement	16%	8%	12%	5%	16%	7%	15%	8%
Not Submitted	2%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	1%	0%

All Grade Levels Combined. Totals may not equal 100%.

Strategic Direction I: Project Focus

The projects that address increasing the graduation and school completion rate of students with disabilities include Instructional Support Teams (IST), cultural competency training curriculum, enhanced SOL scope and sequence with instructional strategies, assistive technology sub-grants, reading instruction and training, early transition and preschool effective practices, positive behavior supports, behavior assessment planning, autism resources, and academic review specialized follow up and technical assistance.

Strategic Direction II: Personnel Development

For the purposes of this plan, fully qualified personnel are defined as those persons holding a five-year, renewable license issued by the Virginia Department of Education with appropriate endorsement in the special education area for the position assigned, holding a current license from another Virginia licensure board in the area for the position assigned, or holding other state credentials required in the area for the position assigned. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) recognizes personnel with a special education conditional provisional license and those who are in the process of attaining the highest level of preparation required for the position assigned. This includes interpreters who are in the process of attaining state or national credentials.

Goal 2
Increase the supply of qualified special educators and related service personnel who are endorsed in the special education area to which they are assigned.

Trend – The number of teachers who are working toward being fully qualified for their teaching assignment with students with disabilities is increasing.

Supply of Qualified Personnel in Virginia
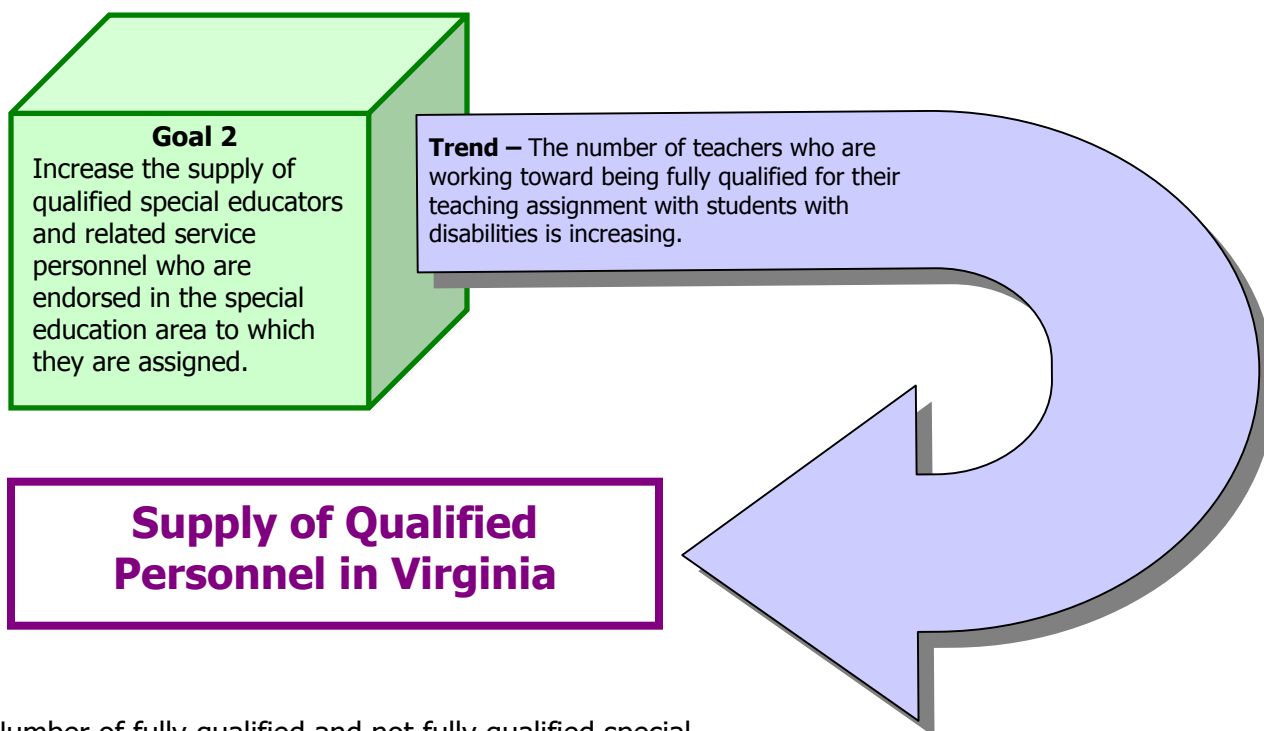
Number of fully qualified and not fully qualified special education teachers in full-time employment
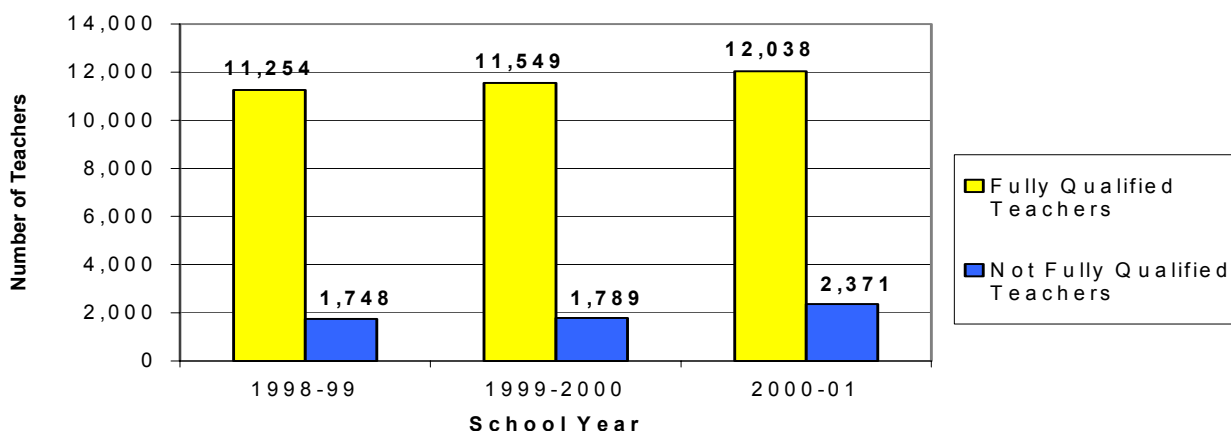
Number of fully qualified and not fully qualified other special education and related services personnel employed

Number of Related Services Personnel

School Year	Fully Qualified Related Services Personnel	Not Fully Qualified Related Services Personnel
1998-99	3,606	240
1999-2000	3,741	292
2000-2001	3,972	263
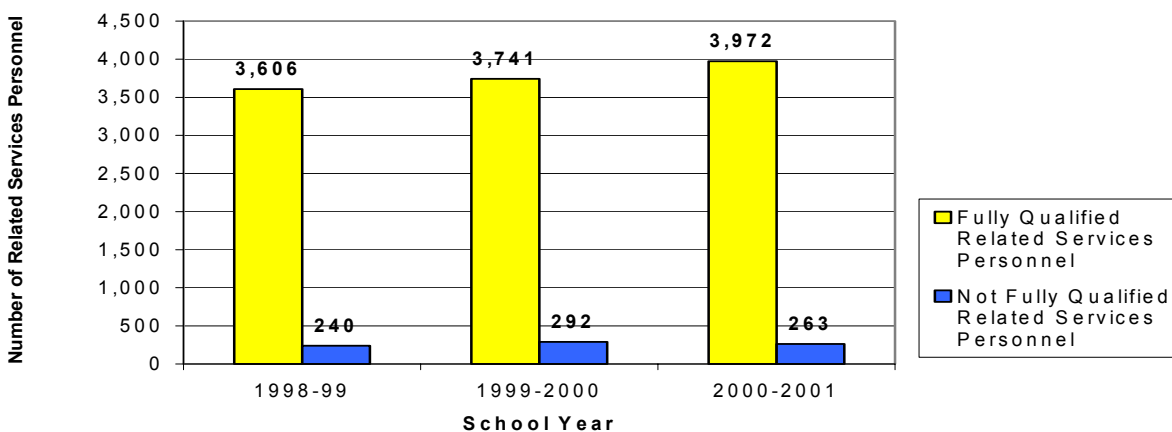
Number of fully qualified and not fully qualified interpreters employed

Number of Qualified and Not Qualified Interpreters

School Year	Qualified Interpreters	Not Qualified Interpreters
1996-97	49	200
1997-98	59	217
1998-99	74	193
2001-02	72	205
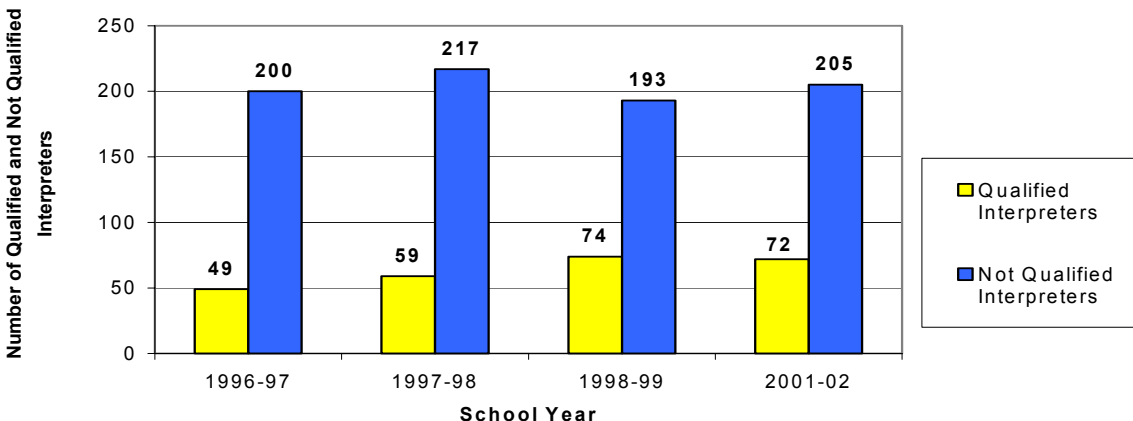
Number of retained personnel from the previous year who are fully qualified and not fully qualified special education teachers and other personnel

Number of Retained Personnel

School Year	Fully Qualified Personnel Retained	Not Fully Qualified Personnel Retained
1996-97	13,164	989
1997-98	13,622	1,066
1998-99	13,843	1,207
1999-2000	14,378	1,209
2000-01	15,185	1,599
2001-02	14,835	1,537
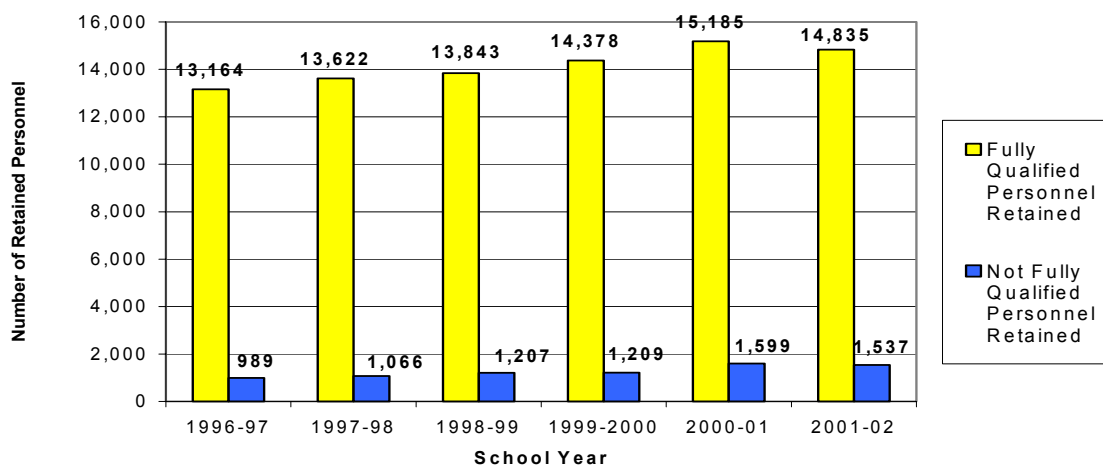
Strategic Direction II: Personnel Development

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) recognizes state-approved colleges and universities through a governmental activity requiring professional education programs within a state to meet standards of quality so that their graduates will be eligible for state licensing.

Goal 3
Promote ongoing professional development opportunities that demonstrate and instruct in research-based effective practices by increasing the statewide availability of personnel preparation opportunities in all endorsement areas.

Trend – VDOE, working with its partners, is increasing the number of approved special education teacher preparation programs.

Personnel Preparation in All Endorsement Areas

Number of program completers for personnel preparation in Virginia's colleges by endorsement area in 2001

Bar chart — Number of Program Completers by Endorsement Area:
- Early Childhood: 33
- Hearing Impairment: 0
- Emotional Disturbance: 113
- Learning Disabilities: 144
- Mental Retardation: 63
- Severe Disabilities: 10
- Speech Language: 35
- Visual Impairments: 0
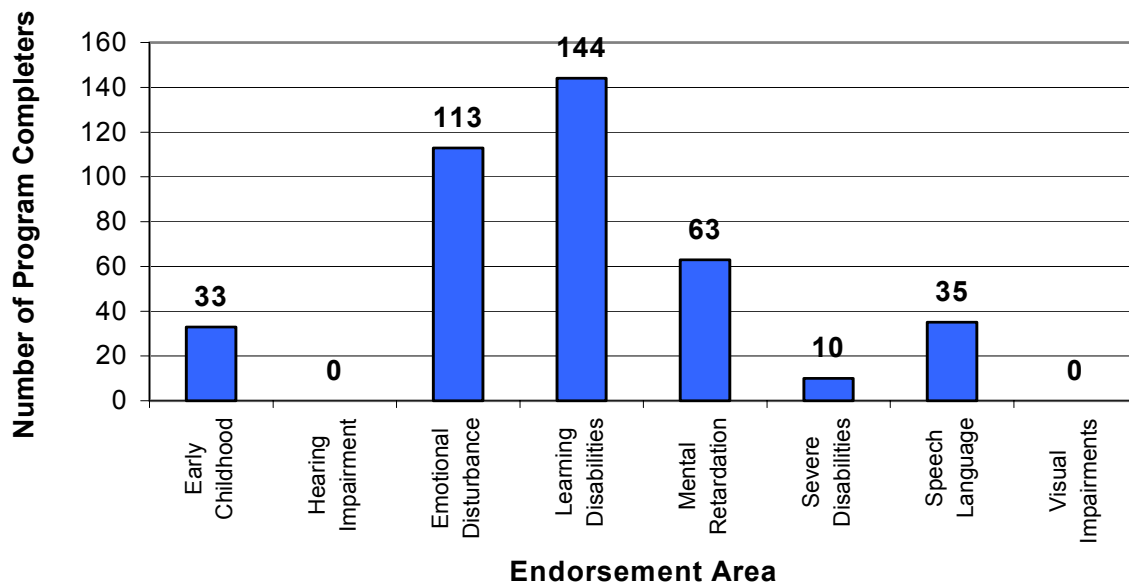
Number of approved special education teacher preparation programs

Teacher Preparation Programs	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01
Early Childhood Special Education	6	6	7
Emotional Disturbance	18	18	23
Hearing Impairment	0	0	1
Learning Disability	21	21	24
Mental Retardation	17	17	19
Severe Disabilities	6	6	6
Speech-Language Disorders	5	5	5
Vision Impairment	0	0	1
Totals	**73**	**73**	**86**

Strategic Direction II: Personnel Development

Performance indicators reflecting this goal include the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) special education information and training activity, as well as local reporting of their comprehensive system of personnel development.

Goal 4
Ensure ongoing personnel development opportunities that demonstrate and instruct in research-based effective practices by increasing the statewide personnel development opportunities focusing on effective practices (including collaboration) for administrators, regular educators, paraprofessionals, special educators, and related service providers.

Trend – VDOE is increasing the number of personnel development activities offered to local educational agencies: academic improvement, collaboration, qualified personnel, results-based management, & procedural compliance.

Ongoing Personnel Development

Number and types of personnel who accessed services of the VDOE Training/Technical Assistance Centers (T/TAC)

TYPES OF PERSONNEL	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02
Administrator, General Education	833	1,346	1,499	1,954
Administrator, Special Education	1,314	2,053	2,376	2,161
Guidance Counselor	249	430	707	576
Human Services Agency Staff	504	535	917	808
Occupational Therapist	479	818	635	436
Paraprofessional (or Assistant)	946	2,103	1,924	2,490
Parent/Family	713	1,041	1,394	1,801
Physical Therapist	170	314	230	155
Other Related Service Provider	587	973	914	973
Speech-Language Pathologist	1,111	1,611	1,485	1,224
Teacher, General Education	3,502	5,239	5,671	7,405
Teacher, Special Education	7,537	11,727	12,471	10,747
Transition Coordinator	281	342	1,126	1,083
University Professor/Student	1,044	1,771	1,717	2,657
Vocational Teacher/ Administrator	154	200	142	167
Other	967	2,214	2,241	2,502
Total	**20,391**	**32,717**	**35,449**	**37,139**

Training sponsored by Special Education units in the Virginia Department of Education – 297 training sessions in 2000-01; 184 training sessions in 2001-02

Training for Partners for Improvement - Administrator leadership, Medicaid, Coordinating Services in Jails, School Social Work, State Update, & Secondary Transition Partnerships

Training for Academic Performance – Character Education, Cultural Competency, Disability Awareness, Assessment & Behavior Plans, Dropout/Truancy, Instructional Strategies, Instructional Support Teams (IST), Educational Services in Jails, Paraprofessionals, Assistive Technology, Transportation, School Nursing/Health, School Safety, Speech-Language Pathology, Secondary Transition Planning, & Individual Education Plan Access to the General Curriculum

Training for Performance-Based Results – State Improvement Grant/State Improvement Plan, Data Issues, Standards of Learning, Alternate Assessment, udent Evaluation

Improvement Plan Strategic Approaches

Training for Collaborative Skills – General and Special Education, Conflict Management, Inter-Agency, Mediation, Parent Training, & Surrogate Parents

Training for Compliance – Special Education Regulations, Child Find & Child Study, Discipline of Students with Disabilities, Due Process & Complaints, Hearing Officers, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Local Educational Agency (LEA) Annual Plans & Local Improvement Plans, Section 504, Prior Notice, Federal Program Monitoring, & IDEA

Training for Qualified Personnel – Recruitment for Disability Specific Areas, Futures Scanning, & Interpreter training

Strategic Direction II: Project Focus

The projects designed to increase personnel development include Institutions of Higher Education and Local Educational Agencies (IHE/LEA) partnerships, paraprofessional training, support for low incidence endorsement programs (hearing impairment, vision impairment, and severe disabilities), high incidence endorsement programs (mental retardation, learning disabilities, and emotional disturbance), interpreter training, and tuition assistance for early childhood special education. Support for the web-based teacher recruitment system, "teacher-teacher.com."

Strategic Direction III: Parent and Student Involvement

For many years the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has supported parent involvement, but had not compiled information about parent involvement in special education processes. Performance indicators reflecting progress toward increasing parents' and students' involvement include: participation at various education decision-making meetings, self perceptions of satisfaction and involvement, attendance at events that provide information and training, and the use of mediation to resolve conflict.

Goal 5
Increase parents' and students' active participation in special education decision-making

Trends – 1) A parents' satisfaction survey in 2001 reported high ratings in IEP meetings but lower ratings in knowledge of transition issues. 2) An increasing number of requests for mediation services indicate its use in resolving conflict.

Parent and Student Participation

Percentage of a sample of parents' and students' participation in the special education process, 2001

Bar chart — Percentage of Parent and Student Participation vs. Areas of Special Education Involvement:

- All Grade-Levels: Student IEP Meeting Attendance - 97.7%
- Transition-Age Students: IEP Meeting Attendance - 66%
- Parent Knows Type of Diploma Child will Receive - 63%
- Parent Received Referral for IEP/Evaluation Questions - 58%
- Parent Aware of School Efforts to Involve them in Advisory Boards - 55%

Satisfaction rating from a sample of parents on the special education process, 2001

	Rating
Transition Process	2.96
IEP Process	3.27
Evaluation Process	3.26
Meetings & Advisory Boards	3.25

1 — Not Satisfied 2 — Somewhat Satisfied 3 — Satisfied 4 — Very Satisfied 5 — Extremely Satisfied
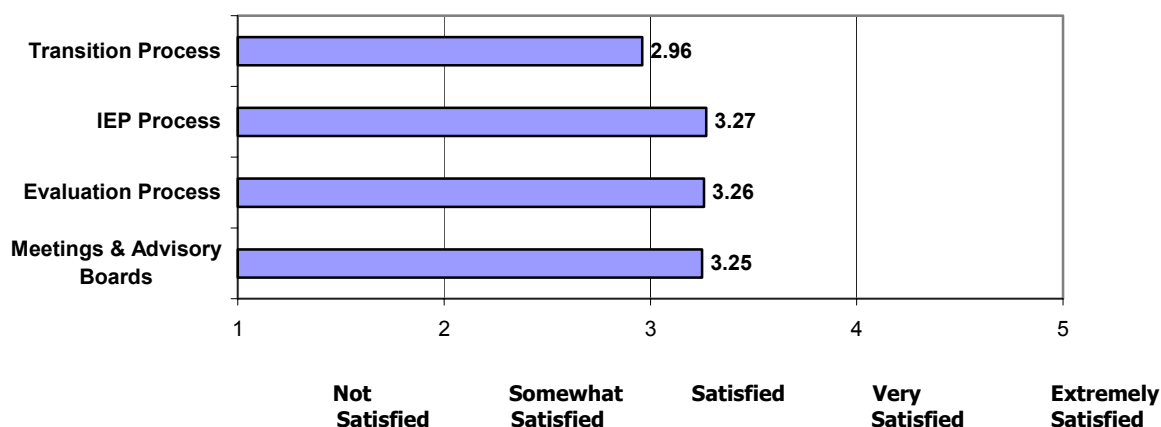
Mediation Activity

Number of mediation service requests and cases that were received and processed

School Year	Mediation Requests	Mediation Cases	Cases Closed Prior to Mediation
1999-2000	49	45	4
2000-01	95	83	12
2001-02	104	88	16
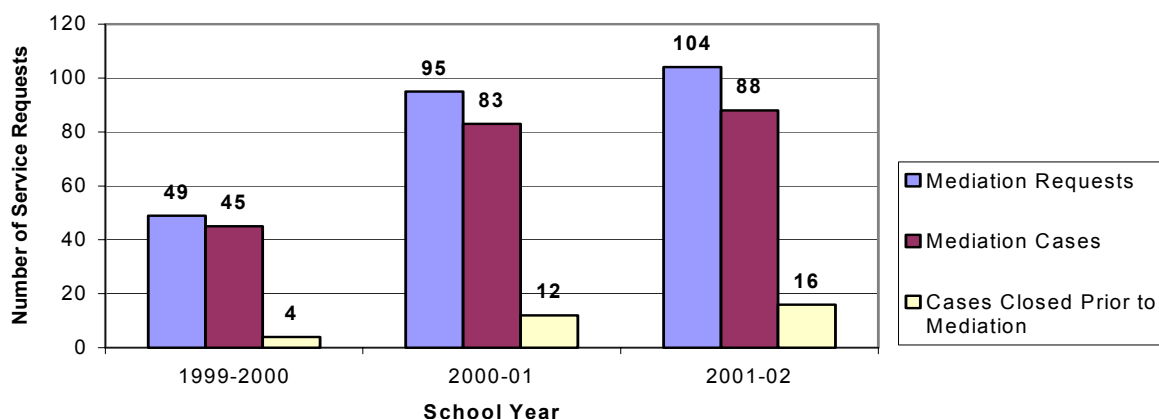
Percentage of mediation cases resolved or partially resolved

School Year	Percentage of Cases Resolved or Partially Resolved
1999-2000	78%
2000-01	75%
2001-02	82%
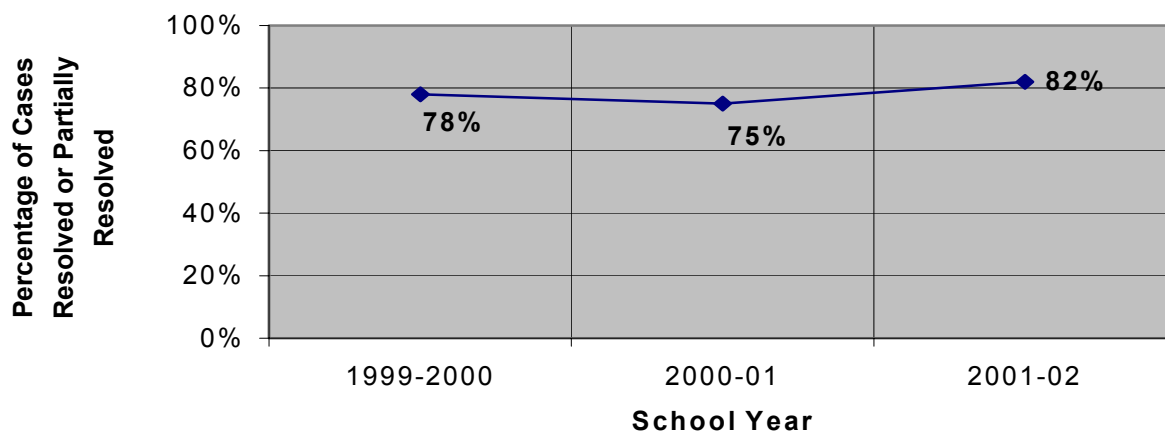
Strategic Direction III: Project Focus

The projects that address parent and student involvement include support for the Parent Resource Centers (PRC), Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC), data collection through surveys on parent satisfaction with the special education process, PRC and Training and Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) collaboratives, local special education advisory committee guidelines, partnerships with Department of Rehabilitation Services, Post-secondary Education Rehabilitation Training Project (PERT), web-based college guide information system, secondary transition outcomes project, and secondary programs and policy taskforce.

Next Steps
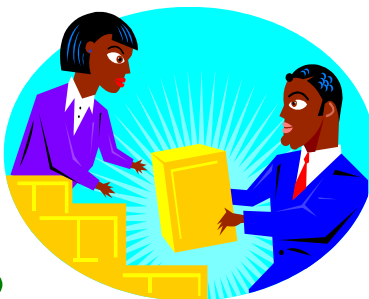
Training and Technical Assistance Needs

The Virginia Special Education Improvement Plan (VSEIP) report compiled local educational agency data in student achievement (graduation and school completion), personnel development, and parent involvement. These state aggregate data suggest areas needing improvement for local educational agency and early intervention system personnel. The 2003-04 priorities for the Virginia Department of Education and Training/Technical Assistance Center (T/TAC) system are to:

- **Provide for personnel development that fosters students with disabilities' access to the general curriculum and achievement in the least restrictive environment,**

- **Assist schools in meeting Virginia's accreditation standards, and**

- **Assist local educational agencies in meeting the qualified personnel requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).***

Virginia Department of Education Resources

Priority Projects for VDOE and T/TAC
Increase staff participation and follow-up technical assistance for school academic review
Enhance Standards of Learning scope and sequence with accommodations and assistive technology
Disseminate effective instructional strategies
Provide reading technical assistance and link with *Virginia's Reading First* training
Encourage early transition and preschool effective practices and programs (including integrated placement options)
Provide for training in positive behavior supports
Link with parent involvement activity and local parent resource centers
Support Instructional Support Team (IST) sites
Provide for autism technical assistance and link with expert resources
Support training and technical assistance for *Virginia Alternate Assessment Program* and develop alternate achievement standards
Create state task force to recommend changes in middle and secondary programs
Support secondary transition outcomes project

Product Development and Dissemination – statewide training and technical assistance will be disseminated at three levels:

Personal Change – completes process of implementation, analysis, and evaluation
- Consultation
- Long-term technical assistance
- Mentorships
- Peer coaching & teaming
- Advanced training

Skills Acquisition – applies new skills and competencies
- Information services
- Video training
- Training workshops
- Web shops
- Cross-visitation models
- Consultation
- Long-term technical assistance
- Mentorships
- Peer coaching & teaming

Information Delivery – initial stage that creates awareness
- Information services: lending library, research, video demonstrations, and newsletters
- Guideline documents
- Presentations
- Cross-visitation models
- Telecommunications
- Web shops